

Extension of Range of the Western Grey Kangaroo, *Macropus fuliginosus*, in Victoria

By G. M. COULSON*

Identification

The two species of grey kangaroo inhabit areas of forest or woodland, and are often observed feeding in adjacent open areas. Both the eastern grey, *Macropus giganteus*, and the western grey, *Macropus fuliginosus*, occur in Victoria, with a narrow zone of sympatry extending southwards from the Swan Hill area into the Grampians Ranges, then westwards into south-eastern South Australia (Figure 1). These closely related species cannot be distinguished by skeletal characteristics, but may be separated on the basis of criteria such as length of oestrous cycle and of gestation period, hair follicle density and blood serum proteins (Kirsch and Poole, 1972). An experienced observer can identify animals in the field by their coat colour: eastern greys range from silver-grey to grey-brown whereas western greys are a darker chocolate-brown with a dark brown to black face and ears (see cover illustration).

Extension of Range

The discovery near Inglewood, central Victoria, of two specimens of the western grey kangaroo represents an eastward extension of approximately 100 km of the known range of this species (Figure 1). Both specimens were road kills found by the author. They were lodged with the National Museum of Victoria and their identity was confirmed by W. E. Poole, CSIRO Wildlife Research, Canberra. The first specimen (C17186), a female, was collected on 27/7/77 approximately 5 km south-west of Inglewood on the main Kingower road (36°30'36'' S, 143°40'55'' E).

The southern side of the road was cleared farmland while the vegetation to the north was a woodland of yellow gum, *Eucalyptus leucoxylon*, and grey box, *E. microcarpa*, with an understorey predominantly of gold-dust wattle, *Acacia acinacea*, golden wattle, *A. pycnantha*, and Chinese scrub, *Cassinia arcuata*. The second specimen (C22281), also a female, was collected on 13/4/79 about 9 km south-west of Inglewood on the same road (36°30'40'' S, 143°40'39'' E). The pouch contained a naked young with a pes length of 3.4 cm. Vegetation on both sides of the road was a woodland/open forest of yellow gum, *E. leucoxylon*, grey box, *E. microcarpa*, and red ironbark, *E. sideroxylon*, with an understorey of such shrubs as golden wattle, *A. pycnantha*, spreading wattle, *A. diffusa*, Chinese scrub, *C. arcuata* and flame heath, *Styphelia behrii*. A brief survey in September 1979 located eleven individuals of *M. fuliginosus* feeding at dusk in cleared farmland about 3 km north of the localities of the specimens collected (Figure 1). To date the eastern grey kangaroo has not been observed in the Inglewood area. The only other large macropod sighted is the black or swamp wallaby, *Wallabia bicolor*.

Distribution

Kirsch and Poole (1972) noted that the distribution of *M. fuliginosus* follows closely that of mallee associations in Victoria and New South Wales. Although Inglewood is surrounded by discontinuous areas of mallee, *M. fuliginosus* has not yet been positively identified within any of these areas and is clearly not confined to them. Without detailed knowledge of the species' habitat requirements it is difficult to delineate the probable limits to its distribution. However, the absence of

*Department of Zoology, University of Melbourne, Parkville, Victoria, 3052.

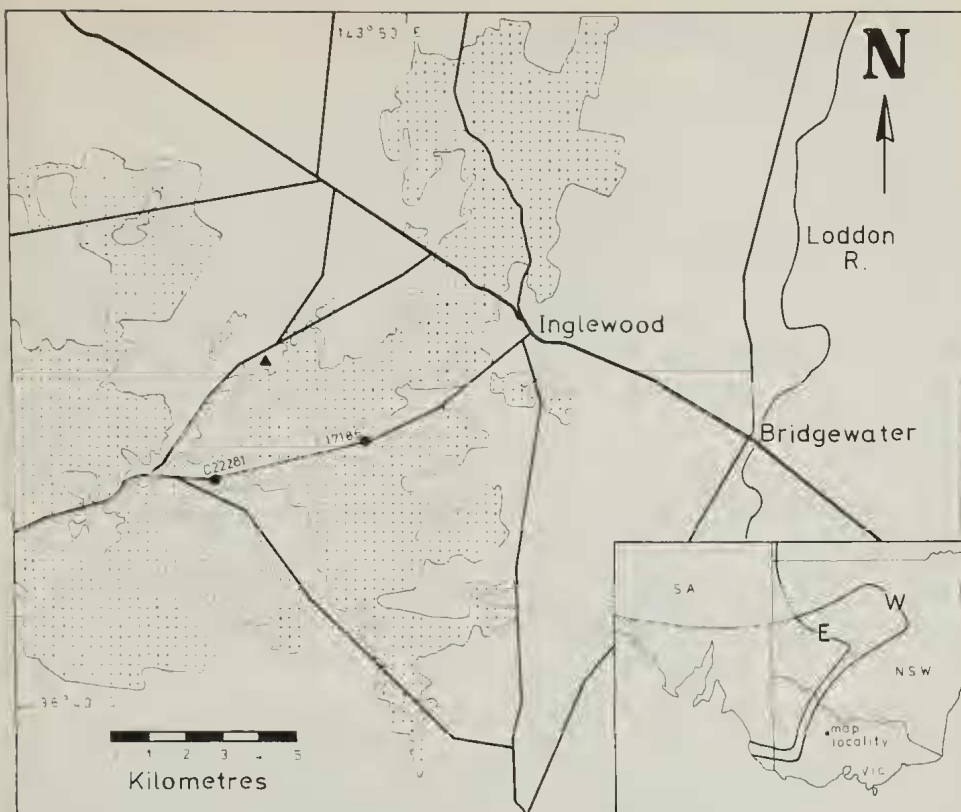


Fig. 1. Map of the Inglewood area, central Victoria. Stippling indicates areas of woodland and forest. Localities of museum specimens of *M. fuliginosus* are shown by circles; the triangle indicates sightings

of *M. fuliginosus*. The inset shows the map locality and the presumed limits of the range of *M. giganteus* (E) and *M. fuliginosus* (W) after Kirsch and Poole (1972).

any sizeable stands of woodland or forest for some distance to the east of Inglewood (Figure 1) suggests that *M. fuliginosus* is unlikely to extend beyond the Loddon River, except perhaps near its junction with the Murray River at Swan Hill. There are substantial areas of apparently suitable habitat south of Inglewood, but the extent of distribution in this direction is unknown.

Surveys of distribution are being continued; the author would be grateful for

any information about grey kangaroo populations in this area.

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- Poole, W. E. (1977). The eastern grey kangaroo, *Macropus giganteus*, in south-east South Australia: its limited distribution and need of conservation. *CSIRO Div. Wildl. Res. Tech. Pap. No. 31*.

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